
Grow War Munitions at Home for 1918

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THE extent of our Nation's gain from the home garden movement changes as conditions change. In the early spring of 1917 our need for home garden production was the need of a country in which war was merely an oversea reflection and a transatlantic echo. It was based on necessity for supplementing a national food supply depleted by the insistent requirements of European nations in which production had been checked by the ravages of war. America, having no war of its own, was in the position of a big brother charged with helping those less fortunate.

Suddenly becoming a nation at war, America found itself confronted with a food problem as vital as that of the battle-torn countries of Europe. Overnight the American Home Garden became a War Garden. The expansion of the military establishment and the draft on laborers by munition and kindred factories resulted in decreasing the production of food-stuffs through the normal profes-

sional channels and thus emphasized the importance of the amateur's garden in the back yard or vacant lot.

This importance is vastly magnified for the coming season of 1918. Not only does the growing need of Europe increase that continent's demands upon our food reservoir, but our own future farm production is threatened with shrinkage. Government figures indicate that not less than six hundred thousand men, trained and experienced in farm work, have been taken from the farms of America since the beginning of this country's participation in the war. These figures are ominous. With six hundred thousand farm workers suddenly shifted into the class of non-producers it requires no imagination to foresee that 1918 will show a more grievous shortage of farm labor than did 1917. Everyone knows how severe was that shortage last season. No one can fail to realize what all this will inevitably mean in the matter of farm production.

With this definite handicap in sight for the farm crops the backyard and vacant lot garden becomes more than ever a War Garden and a national necessity. The single factor most vital to military success is food. Food is the one thing for which there is no substitute. When Germany was cut off from the nitrate fields of Chile, German chemists and engineers commandeered the nitrogen of the air for the creation of the nitric acid essential in the manufacture of explosives. Wood pulp has been substituted for cotton fibre in the making of gun cotton, and in divers other ways science, by devising substitutes, has overcome shortage. No scientist has yet discovered a substitute for food. The only solution of the food problem is an increased production and to make this possible the home gardeners of America face 1918 with a responsibility far greater than that with which they set about their work last season.

Volume is not the sole requirement for food production in this time of emergency. Conservation of transportation is equally important. So far as possible all food should be grown in the immediate neighborhood of its place of ultimate use. It is imperative to the national welfare that no avoidable strain be placed on the transportation facilities of the country. Shipments of foodstuffs require freight cars which are urgently needed for shipments of munitions, fuel and other supplies vital to the needs of a nation at war. Unnecessary shipments must be eliminated. This means production of food where it is to be used. This involves the cultivation of food gardens at every

home and on every inch of vacant land in the neighborhood of cities, towns and villages. Last year the National War Garden Commission reported the existence of nearly three million gardens in yards and vacant lots. This year there should be five million. This added increase will be none too great to meet the increased needs of a situation immeasurably more serious than was that of 1917.

America's needs are given emphasis by the situation in England and France. Lord Rhondda, Great Britain's Food Administrator, in letters to the Commission summarizes the hopes of Great Britain. Lord Rhondda says: "I hope the exportable surplus of American primary foodstuffs will be much larger than the present estimates, as the result of food economies by which the United States and Canadian homes are helping to win the war, just as surely as is the production of munitions. Every American woman is in a position to bring nearer the inevitable atonement for the brutal outrages in Belgium, Armenia and Serbia, the sinking of the "Lusitania" and other horrors by her day-by-day economies. There need be no fear that the sacrifices will be wasted over here. Unless the Entente Allies are able to import the supplies necessary for the army and the population, victory may slip from our united grasp."

In a more recent statement Lord Rhondda declared compulsory rationing of essential foodstuffs to be probable. He added: "I view the situation with grave anxiety. I have repeatedly said in public and private that there is no reason for immediate alarm, although there is every reason for strict econ-

omy and precautionary measures. These statements have in some instances been twisted into a declaration that there is plenty of food in England and France. The food position in this country, and, as I understand it, in France also, can now without any exaggeration be described as critical and anxious. As I am now unable to avoid compulsory rationing, I fear it will have to come with long queues of people awaiting in the severe weather in practically every town in England for the daily necessities of life."

One of the means which will prove most helpful to the home gardener in adding to the food supply is the national daylight saving scheme, which Germany adopted early in the war and which a number of other nations have since put into operation with great profit as a war measure. This simple plan of turning the clock forward and starting the day's work an hour earlier during the summer months will give an extra hour of daylight in the afternoon which will furnish the opportunity of devoting that much more time to the cultivation of the soil. The results which can be accomplished by the addition of an hour every day for garden work will largely increase the product raised.

By their energy, industry and application in 1917 the home gardeners of the United States showed that they were alive to the call of patriotism. The garden slacker received no more cordial consideration than did the military slacker. Home gardening has come to be regarded as the gift of a patriotic people to a nation in need. It is also an enterprise of individual benefit. Through garden activities Americans in hundreds of thous-

ands of households have learned new lessons in the joy of living. Last year's excursion into home gardening was to many a voyage of discovery as to the delights of the table when supplied with vegetables freshly gathered from the home garden. It was also a journey of exploration through a land of new healthfulness and strength revealed through the medium of outdoor exercise and wholesome vegetable diet.

The coming season should see the re-cultivation of every garden cultivated in 1917 and the addition of all the other garden planting area available. During three and a half years of warfare the Allied Nations have drained their agricultural resources to a point where productive possibilities are now at a minimum. The world's shipping facilities are so inadequate that the European food supply must necessarily come from America as the land from which shipments can be made with the least tax on the ships left available by submarine warfare. The time requirements for shipments from Australia and other remote countries are such as to be prohibitive. America is the one place upon which the Allies may depend for the feeding of their armies and populations. To enable America to do its share, our Home Gardeners must recognize that they are War Gardeners and therefore vital to the success of the armies. They must produce foodstuffs on a tremendous scale, with the central thought that eternal industry on the part of their gardens is the price of world wide freedom.

As in 1917 the need is for food production F. O. B. the Kitchen Door. This means that it will be

none too much if two or more War Gardens are made to grow where one grew before, creating a vast aggregate yield at the points of consumption. By the same logic there must be universal application of the simple principles of Home Canning and Drying of vegetables and fruits. Last year the households of America created a winter supply of canned goods amounting to more than half a billion jars. This year they should make it more than a billion. To Food Production F. O. B. the Kitchen Door they will thus add a Food Supply F. O. B. the Pantry Shelf. By making themselves both

Soldiers of the Soil and Cohorts of Conservation they will form a vast army of aggression, fearless, defiant and invincible. With forces thus organized to support the military establishment America can conquer the alien foe and do her part to rescue and redeem civilization. Without these forces she is helpless. Neutrality on the food question is as impossible as neutrality in the war itself. In the great conflict we shall win or lose according to our solution of the food problem.

Let us plant gardens as never before and grow munitions at home to help win the war.

THE NATIONAL WAR GARDEN COMMISSION

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